



## TO THE READER

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# POETS OF TOMORROW



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# POETS OF TOMORROW

## THIRD SELECTION

*Representing the work of*

Lawrence Little

David Gascoyne

Laurie Lee

Adam Drinan

Arthur Harvey



THE HOGARTH PRESS  
37 MECKLENBURGH SQUARE  
LONDON, W.C.1.  
1942

First published 1942

821.08

L 74.523

Accession no 4223

821.08  
L 721 P

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY GIBBS, BAMFORTH AND COMPANY (LUTON) LTD., LUTON

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## LAWRENCE LITTLE

LAWRENCE LITTLE was born in 1921, and is now serving with the Armed Forces in this country. He says of his own work :  
“ The poetry I want to write must be sharp and direct and born of the subject matter, not merely of a fascination for words and technical tricks. Any obscurity in it at present is due to lack of technical ability, never to fear of lucidity.”

## CONVIVIAL SATURDAY

Oh, T.F., my lungs are bubbled  
With laughing, this thick havoc of flesh  
That smiles, saunters, is drunkenly sour,  
These poodle women, and boys who have dabbled

Mildly in sex, and swagger their power ;  
My wild ribs ache  
With the welter of mirth there is,  
My eyes are wedged with the tears they make.

Don't prod me from staring  
Energetically at the busts and shanks  
Of them, their glittering, sensual pairing,  
The fullsomeness of their ranks.

Nursing these fish and chips  
That pulse in a greasy shadow of life  
And drip their warm oil through my fingertips,  
Maudlin before the knife,

I am a watching wizard  
Cupping a sphere that wrestles amongst them  
And scouts their turvy facade,  
Ripping each frilly hem.

## JOURNEY IN BEER FUMES

IN the return from Whitley  
The houses are blinkered with dusk  
And stretch at the runt train queasily,  
Prying, but wanting no risk.

They miss the inside  
Where we sit on strange knees  
And sing when we've battened our pride  
And burst into our vanities.

God love us—our god  
Is this laughing—this tune would turn  
Old grandaddy out of his sod  
And give him something to learn.

I wander my eyes at them,  
And their timer, a snipe of a man  
Perched on a seat's edge, and dumb  
Only below, where his clubfeet plan.

He's chuckled his height  
And his treacherous feet away, and leads  
In this Saturday belching rite,  
Sweating in rosy beads.

“Come on, Charlie, now,  
Hold yourself up now,  
Don't spew all over me trousers now,  
Come on, 'Rose of Tralee.' ”

“ Love us, I’ve split me knickers—  
’ere, don’t let everyone hear—  
Gawd, he’s gone off in a fit. ’arold,  
Haven’t you got no pin ? ”

Gentlemen, let me have word,  
Here we are all blood brethren,  
Fraternally happy men,  
White as the turd of a bird.

Hats off to the fine frontal stretch  
Of flesh our young sailor shows,  
It’s a hard but a wonderful catch  
For a woman to choose.

Friends ? We are all bound friends,  
Though the binding’s weak.  
Can snuggle down, ends to ends  
Against endless cheek.

And this beer-passion still  
Tries to lull us so socially. The air’s sick  
And shot with it. I’ve had my fill ;

If there’s no getting closer  
Than grins and this guzzling, this child’s idiocy  
Of flouting its running nose,  
Then meeting’s not worth its puzzling.

I’ll smile  
And stamp my feet, laugh with them and at them,

Not bother to think awhile,  
Yet when it's over, and train's bunked for the night,  
We'll step out  
On the carpeted dribbles and streakings of beer  
And be cold then, caught,  
Stranger drear, and lost in the crowd's traffic.

## TWO PEOPLE

Two people I opposed  
Have lately died ; some  
Disfigure your intended view of man  
And muck your models of him ; these  
Were customary in limb, but had an apathy  
For spontaneities  
That made their casualness a tidy motive  
And each glance a sieve  
To work our answering purpose from its flippancy.

Remember, the old woman  
Was not sick with age. She had outgrown  
A calm love of it, and found its feet too slow  
To meet the womanly rush of death,  
But was not sick. She lived the habitual life  
A tree must live, lopped  
Of its child branches, purposeless,  
Yet still in the practice of its past intent.

The old man, Yorkshireman,  
Was deaf with a hearing that allowed  
Only what feelings wouldn't crowd  
Upon him, leave to come ; was dumb  
Only when speaking would not be proud,  
And stilled his pottering eyes  
To see all circumstance he chose, and no surprise.

Often when I met Anna,  
Only a little bent forward, she would stop  
With her oval basket high  
Upon her elbow, and her careful breasts

Woollen and gainly in their care,  
And grin and chat  
Through the repulsive falseness of her teeth,  
Though even while she spoke, you saw  
The reservations of her confidences  
Dull the edge of her mouth,  
And her sidethoughts of cunning that she never executed  
Jig and pirouette  
Through every courteous smile.

She would curse  
All living tempestuousness—the black  
Sinews of her running cat would rack  
Age deeper into her bone—  
And made a murdering nurse  
To any cupidity of illness.

When she died  
The gaunt cavities of her harsh room  
Drooped from the collapsing  
Of her will, the resolute grip  
That lapsed the one time over freely  
Into a whimper for recession. Rest  
Her lone body, how it crouched  
In its relaxing death  
Under its wondering sheets ; her chin,  
Looking lost in a sea of uselessness,  
Could only, fool's way, help her grin.

His death was a threehundred miles away one,  
And scarcely now seems done.  
It stretched over years of illness

And came piecemeal, till with a pricelessness  
He had no time to note  
He felt his lungs' faithful vice  
Slip loose, and leave him all his body's use,  
And then, before he could assess its windy volume,  
Took him out of the room.

## SONG OF THE YOUNG BODY

PLEASURE's a windy plant  
Gripping a clod on a cliff's edge  
And sight of it's always dimmed  
After a staring ; strip it of leaf and it's a stiff  
Unfavouring stalk, coarser than sedge is.

It seeds many pledges,  
Shoals of them, fit only for man's shoals  
Like shells that may open to pearl bead,  
Most, sterile to need.

Give me love for my loves, pain the disdainment,  
And settle the nettled roots  
Of the happy plant into advantage soil.  
Pleasure and lasting please are meant chain,  
not one to be other's foil,  
Though it's only mind's means  
to the attainment.

## SONG OF MY VILLAGE NONCHALANCE

I of the shallow, the shuck brain  
Blame no one, seek no gain,  
Turn to myself, and am sane.

The fall of a splintered stone  
Leaves cliff no need to atone  
For the decay it has shown.

What wholesomeness remain  
Must have no pity stain  
Though ruin lie in the grain.

Rot deep in the bone  
Will give the flesh its tone  
But that it must never own.

Though it is crab-wide pain  
There's easing in its train  
Unless it is overmuch given rein :

Our born-there town, the well-known  
Gives echoes not lost nor lone  
That are pain's herbals, dossed with us,  
and here, here sown.

## SCENE

THERE is some grass, too thin  
To be windblown, and some struggling  
Nasturtiums, sown after their rightful  
Natal period. And they are seemingly peaceful.

The shadow of a spade descends upon  
Their withered nakedness, man-  
Made and now destroyed. Jetblocked  
Earth alloyed with products of the busy insect

Mounds their undug trench, and callous wrists  
Wrench their roots from a sodded rest.  
They must disintegrate, succeeded  
By sapped wood posts of pine embedded

In slug-slime spreading concrete,  
Smoothed by a clothcapped man of sweat  
And laboured grime. He sighs and bends,  
Flexing his broken toil-gnarled hands,

And a cat, missing the earthy view,  
Presses a diffident paw in the new-  
Made concrete : the man curses,  
But he is tired : how slowly time passes.



## TRAM-RIDE

I shall wake  
Up, when this ride is over,  
And find that I am dead, and this thin  
Room a coffin, for I am cold inside  
And death is drifting upon me  
With each man's breath.

The dripping air  
Clumsily fumbles at each mouth,  
I can see nothing through it  
But limply living bodies in a sweatblurred  
Space, and a man's eyes showing  
In some creature's face.

No one moves unless  
The tram so does : we are travelling  
In iron grooves down an interminable  
Tunnel of work : encourage and flatter  
Us, for we are wondering at our journey  
And its barren ending.

Questions have been  
Whispered in our ears, and we could not  
Answer them, yet they are answerable ;  
Soon we shall be reaching more than  
A travel terminus, for we shall find  
The answers : lie to us,

We shall need  
Much more than tram-rides then :

Ask to be men, and be cursed at  
For our greed, but neither curses nor all  
The promises that lies can give will hinder  
Us : soon, we shall live.

## YESTERDAY

I HAD gathered together  
All that was withered, stalk stubbles  
Stark sticks in the earth, wet  
Cat-warmed cut grass, smothered

In weeds and their suck-strangling  
Stems mingling with all muck  
And worm moulds, and the yellowness  
Dripped from the laburnums ;

Caught roots that were coarse  
In the rake, and the sheared shoots  
Of trees, all trace of decay, heaped  
It behind primly squat privets

On to a fuming mass of some otherwise  
Long-dead grass, a fermenting  
Reminder of what was once fertile  
And fresh, lush with aliveness,

Left it there in its tired fleshiness  
With a glance at its fetid death-bed  
Flung with a carelessness  
Like the work of the hands I had.

## NAVVIES ON TANK-TRAPS

“ Look at him, Rynter, whose arm  
Like the sucked pith of an orange, was squashed  
Dry of its flushing blood beneath a prop’s lapse, its crushing  
  
Left me with his one cry, and the shud  
Of his shoulders’ blades. Look at him, guarding  
The crops of our sweat, stark, budding along this road’s side  
  
That slices the flat, now menace of moor.  
He’s watching us, envies us sitting here, having  
The fuss of earthed spades, and our boots toed, heavy with  
lime suds,  
  
Knolling the road. The nerves of his stump  
Itch to make muscles stretch, he’s in the greed of it, where we’re  
unwilling.”

## YOUNGEST BROTHER

WE were lying opposite ways  
In the bed, and in the last daze of waking  
He half-raised his squashed cheek  
From its pillow, and said

“ It must be horrible to be stuck twins  
Back to back : if they wanted to swim  
One would have to hold breath and be under  
The water. Can’t they be cut apart ? ”

“ No, I don’t think so. Together  
They are two people, but they depend on each other ;  
Blood flows round them both  
As though they were one. If they were cut  
No one could stop them bleeding.”

“ Somewhere I read there are words  
For bleeding, and burning, and even  
For death, but only a few know what they are.  
Is it true ? If you could find the word for bleeding  
You could say it, while you were  
Cutting them, and they couldn’t bleed.”

“ I don’t know about that ; it sounds  
Like your twopenny bloods. Turn over now,  
Ron, and go to sleep. I’m tired,  
And we may have a warning.”

“ All right, but I wonder  
If anyone’s found out the word for living ? ”

## ELEGY

WORLD's severing us, heart ;  
Head's glossed already with the white shine  
Of the dead, and the washing brine  
Of the heart's sweat is lost, its smart  
Drained off, vein's pulse vain and bled.

The stammering jets of the start of youth's  
Wells are tainted, on their basin rim,  
By the simmer of this world of complaint,  
Its choice of runnels each sloped into the same  
Tame, damming silt. How the voice  
Of the yearn of youth wilts  
In a day's turn, dimmer  
Than dying man prays, in this world frame  
Of lying. Faith floats over two hemispheres  
Of hypocrisy, dotes, dithers upon the game and disappears.

## THE YOUNG BODY POETIC

Now I am nineteen  
O God be good to me.  
I'm not too splotched by this world's low scheme,  
Can go some little way under my own steam,  
And delight in being a poet,  
Subjecting my emotions with flimsy  
Used words in enviousness and whimsy,  
While poetry, the shut retiring park,  
Hides in the dark  
Its slow growth show of weeds ;  
But nothing's seen  
While wondering which god, what's poet, and what 19.

## DAVID GASCOYNE

DAVID GASCOYNE was born in 1916, and has already published several books, though it is some time since a volume of his poetry appeared. He says of the work printed here :

" This group of poems represents some of the various types of verse I have been trying to write during the last two or three years.

The ' Phantasmagoria,' written primarily as a *divertissement*, is the first ' surrealist ' poem I have produced since I decided, a few years ago, to abandon the ' surrealist ' technique and general approach to poetry. It will probably be my last poem of this sort.

I feel that poetry of the ' magical ' category,—product of sheer imagination, unrestricted by pure design and untempered by the wisdom of disillusionment,—may be more stimulating, more immediately satisfying to write ; but in the long run is probably less rewarding, less consoling, than that resulting from conflict between the instinctive poetic impulse and the impersonal discipline, the unadorned sobriety of realistic ' sense.' "

## LINES

So much to tell : so measurelessly more  
Than this poor rusting pen could ever dare  
To try to scratch a hint of . . . Words are marks  
That flicker through men's minds like quick black dust ;  
That falling, finally obliterate the faint  
Glow their speech emanates. Too soon all sparks  
Of vivid meaning are extinguished by  
The saturated wadding of Man's tongue. . . .  
And yet, I lie, I lie :  
Can even Omega discount  
The startling miracle of human song ?

## A WARTIME DAWN

DULLED by the slow glare of the yellow bulb ;  
As far from sleep still as at any hour  
Since distant midnight ; with a hollow skull  
In which white vapours seem to reel  
Among limp muddles of old thought ; till eyes  
Collapse into themselves like clams in mud. . . .  
Hand paws the wall to reach the chilly switch ;  
Then nerve-shot darkness gradually shakes  
Throughout the room. *Lie still.* . . . Limbs twitch ;  
Relapse to immobility's faint ache. And time  
A while relaxes ; space turns wholly black.

But deep in the velvet crater of the ear  
A chip of sound abruptly irritates.  
A second, a third chirp ; and then another far  
Emphatic trill and chirrup shrills in answer ; notes  
From all directions round pluck at the strings  
Of hearing with frail finely-sharpened claws.  
And in an instant, every wakened bird  
Across surrounding miles of air  
Outside, is sowing like a scintillating sand  
Its throat's incessantly replenished store  
Of tuneless singsong, timeless, aimless, blind.

Draw now with prickling hand the curtains back ;  
Unpin the blackout-cloth ; let in  
Grim crack-of-dawn's first glimmer through the glass.  
All's yet half-sunk in Yesterday's stale death,  
Obscurely still beneath a moist-tinged blank  
Sky like the inside of a deaf-mute's mouth. . . .  
Nearest within the window's sight, ash-pale

Against a cinder-coloured wall, the white  
Pear-blossom hovers like a stare ; rain-wet  
The further housetops weakly shine ; and there,  
Beyond, hangs flaccidly a lone barrage-balloon.

An incommunicable desolation weighs  
Like depths of stagnant water on this break of day.—  
Long meditation without thought.—Until a breeze  
From some pure Nowhere straying, stirs  
A pang of poignant odour from the earth, an unheard sigh  
Pregnant with sap's sweet tang and raw soil's fine  
Aroma, smell of stone, and acrid breath  
Of gravel puddles. While the brooding green  
Of nearby gardens' grass and trees, and quiet flat  
Blue leaves, the distant lilac mirages, are made  
Clear by increasing daylight, and intensified.

Now head sinks into pillows in retreat  
Before this morning's hovering advance ;  
(Behind loose lids, in sleep's warm porch, half hears  
White hollow clink of bottles,—dragging crunch  
Of milk-cart wheels,—and presently a snatch  
Of windy whistling as the newsboy's bike winds near,  
Distributing to neighbours' peaceful steps  
Reports of last-night's battles) ; at last sleeps.  
While early guns on Norway's bitter coast  
Where faceless troops are landing, renew fire :  
And one more day of War starts everywhere.

*April, 1940.*

## WALKING AT WHITSUN

*La fontaine n'a pas tari  
Pas plus que l'or de la paille ne s'est terni  
Regardons l'abeille  
Et ne songeons pas à l'avenir . . .*

(APOLLINAIRE)

. . . Then let the cloth across my back grow warm  
Beneath such comforting strong rays ! new leaf  
Flow everywhere, translucently profuse,  
And fragrant weed be tall, the banks of lanes  
Sprawl dazed with swarming lion-petalled suns,  
As with largesse of pollen-coloured wealth  
The meadows ; and across these vibrant lands  
Of Summer-afternoon through which I stroll  
Let rapidly gold glazes slide and chase  
Away such shades as chill the hillside trees  
And make remindful mind turn cold. . . .

### The eyes

Of thought stare elsewhere, as though skewer-fixed  
To an imagined sky's immense collapse ;  
Nor can, borne undistracted through this scene  
Of festive plant and basking pastorage,  
The mind find any calm or light within  
The bone walls of the skull ; for at its ear  
Resound recurrent thunderings of dark  
Smoke-towered waves rearing sheer tons to strike  
Down through To-day's last dyke. Day-long  
That far thick roar of fear thuds, on-and-on,  
Beneath the floor of sense, and makes  
All carefree quodlibet of leaves and larks

And fragile tympani of insects sound  
Like Chinese music, mindlessly remote,  
Drawing across both sight and thought like gauze  
Its unreality's taut haze.

But light !

O cleanse with widespread flood of rays the brain's  
Oppressively still sickroom, wherein brood  
Hot festering obsessions ; and absolve  
My introspection's mirror of such stains  
As blot its true reflection of the world !  
Let streams of sweetest air dissolve the blight  
And poison of the News, which every hour  
Contaminates the aether.

I will pass

On far beyond the village, out of sight  
Of human habitation for a while.

Grass has an everlasting pristine smell.  
On high, sublime in his bronze ark, the sun  
Goes cruising across seas of silken sky.  
In fields atop the hillside, chestnut-trees  
Display the splendour of their branches piled  
With blazing candle burdens.—Such a May  
As this might never come again. . . .

I tread

The white dust of a weed-bright lane : alone  
Upon Time-Present's tranquil outmost rim,  
Seeing the sunlight through a lens of dread,  
While anguish makes the English landscape seem  
Inhuman as the jungle, and unreal

Its peace. And meditating as I pace  
The afternoon away, upon the smile  
(Like that worn by the dead) which Nature wears  
In ignorance of our unnatural tears,  
From time to time I think : How such a sun  
Must glitter on their helmets ! How bright-red  
Against this sky's clear screen must ruins burn. . . .

How sharply their invading steel must shine !

*Marshfield, May, 1940.*

## CHAMBRE D'HOTEL

WHILE a sad Sunday's silver light  
Slid through the rain of afternoon  
    And slimed the town's grey stone,  
We side-by-side without a word  
Above the island's cobbled quays  
Round which rolled on a swollen Seine  
    Lay staring at the white  
And barren ceiling ; till it seemed  
We'd lain forever thus entombed  
    Deep in unspeaking spleen.

Oh, when at last I tried to take  
Your hand in mine, your stranger's face  
    Towards my mouth to bend,  
You sprang up from the bed and went  
Away, across the room, to stand  
And watch, through muslin'd window-glass,  
    The plane-trees lean to ask  
The river what you too asked then :  
A riddle without answer and  
    As old as Earth's disgrace.

## JARDIN DU PALAIS ROYAL

*For B. von M.*

THE sky's a faded blue and taut-stretched flag  
Tenting the quadrangle. On three  
Sides the arcade's tenebrous lanes  
(Down which, at times, patchouli'd ghosts flit by—  
Reflected furtively on filmy panes  
Of shops which seem to store only the dusts  
And atmospheres of long outmoded years—  
Intent on fusty vice) restrict the garden-  
Statues' timeless gaze. Here inside this  
Shut-off and bygone place, brown urchin birds  
Play tag and twitter, jittering around  
The central fountain's dance ; while children chase  
Their ragged shadows round about  
The palinged trees, with screams ; and iron chairs  
With pattern-perforated seats drop neat designs  
Like black lace on the gravel. There we sat  
And watched that trembling liquid spire the wind  
Made sway and break and spatter its thin spray  
Like tears upon our hair and tight-clenched hands. . .  
How long ? I have forgotten. But you rocked  
Backwards and forwards, scraping up small stones,  
And would not speak. The day was in July,  
Full of a whitish and exhausting glare. And I  
Could only stare in silence, trying to see  
Into the constantly disintegrating core  
Round which the fountain ever climbed again ;  
Hearing a clack of feet that died away  
Down the dim passage, and the small nerveless din  
Child-voices made behind us. Oh ! but then

You turned, and asked me with inconsolable eyes  
The meaning of the pain that kept us dumb ;  
Then somehow we both knew our pact betrayed ;  
And that chill instant made the garden seem  
Only too like our lives : besieged by Time  
And boxed-in by the thwarting and decayed  
Walls of the haunted Memory's arcade.

## THE PLUMMET HEART

*(In Memory of Hart Crane)*

DOWN, Hart, you fell down sound-  
lessly, as though through shaft of lift,  
leaving the roar of birth's wind-parted rift  
around the topmost floor, no ground

beneath, no wreath of rock  
to crown your exit from this crux ;  
and as you dropped through the restricted flux  
of such duration as the clock

controls, on swift walls shone  
in mirrors as you hurtled by  
the scripture chiselled by your heart : until  
the sea received you, azure antiphon  
whose octave answer is the sky  
where your wrecked smile drifts still.

## PHANTASMAGORIA

(For Margaret W.)

THE wind has stopped at last  
in that little black town on the edge of a violet sea  
where a man in an upstairs-room of the empty house  
which stands overlooking the yard of the Sodium-Works  
is sitting blindfold on the draughty floor  
trying to hear the feeble groans of the North Pole inside his skull  
and thinking of the iron teeth of Death  
thinking of the rusty police-whistle chained to so many necks  
of the last Act of *Faust*  
of the cherry-coloured gown his mistress wore on that fatal night  
when she lost her head so irretrievably while sailing in a gondola  
and of the incomparably curvilinear and seductive effect to be  
obtained  
by writing one's name in water  
with the white of one's own glass eye. . . .  
In this poor blackened town on the edge of a violet sea  
the wind has left stray locks of hair behind  
in almost every street—  
locks which appear like loosely-knotted strands of twilight-sleep  
or fragments of Opal-tree bark  
preserved in wine  
and left all night to dry upon the steps of a Russian church. . . .  
These scattered tresses make the passers-by turn pale  
then hurry home to disinfect their wells  
They glitter faintly like the dust of poisoned stars  
and hypnotise the gaze of the last birds still to remain  
in that seaside-town as black as a burnt cake  
where the dead are sitting propped-up in the windows robed in flags  
of all the nations—where the homeless night

is kept awake by Autumn's chill aurora in the sky  
and silence lolls like smoke along the disused harbour-quays. . . .  
And in this little town like a charred bun beside a sea  
which stains its shores with blackberry-juice ink  
the crowds continue playing their quaint melancholy games  
in street and market-place altho' dense clouds of smoke  
are pouring from the windows of the Luxury Hotel  
in which the foreign guest in Room 13  
swathed in red bandages from head to foot  
lies thinking of the monkey's-paw of Death  
thinking of the frozen music in the eyes of statues  
of the brutal naked beauty of a surgical machine  
of his father's raincoat gleaming in the twilight long ago  
and of the fungus growing on the tree-trunk of Desire. . . .  
In that charcoal-black town on the edge of a vein-coloured sea  
where shadow smoulders in the cave-like shops  
and copper bells toll slowly all day long  
the wheels of a great lacquered Rolls-Royce car  
left lying in the middle of the main-street upside-down  
are to be seen months later still continuing to spin  
in the tensely sensational glare of the naphtha torch  
left burning there by the authorities to mark the fatal spot—  
continuing still to spin like a soul in pain  
like a tin-plate sent whirling out without a word through the  
window-bars of a condemned man's cell  
or like the breasts of Destiny revolving night and day. . . . .  
And now that the day's white wind has stopped at last  
the hoofs of dusk go trampling through the hollow clouds on high  
from beneath their rocks the scorpions of the darkness soon creep  
out  
and faintly in the distance on all sides is to be heard  
the dread hyena-laughter of the prehistoric Night. . . .

Meanwhile through narrow twilit streets flock jostling throngs of  
masks—  
red oblong leather faces stuck with clusters of tiny shells  
faces of cheese with green protruding fangs  
faces like pillows wet with tears and moulting feathers through the  
torn holes of their eyes  
and snarling hairy faces like the hindquarters of apes  
and sickly faces weak as greasy smudges left by flies  
and hungry faces gaping like raw muddy graves in Spring. . . .  
The thoroughfares of Evening swarm with rapid shifting scenes  
and everywhere the lamps of lust and terror thrust their beams  
to scour the countless cage-like haunts of men with scorching light  
while waves of sound roll out across the rooftops overhead—  
waves swollen with dreamy cries and rumbling words  
with the last thick sobs of harlots stabbed to death  
and with that unbearably heart-rending melody which the blind old  
men who live alone in freezing garrets are forever playing to  
themselves upon their broken violins. . . .  
See! here is a ring of dancers round a blazing marriage-bed  
and here is a bunch of bearded dwarfs dangling chained by their  
heels from the top of a convent-wall  
and here are the bones of a Saint which calmly float  
upon the silken surface of a swimming-pool hewn from the heart  
of an amethyst-rock  
in a glass-panelled coffin of cork lit-up inside on the stroke of  
midnight by a magnesium-flare. . . .  
Here is the Theatre standing open to the sky  
in which dead flowers and moonlight perform ballets once an hour  
and there the Children's Home stands on the hill behind the town  
where hidden in steep gardens among shadows and blue shrubs  
an orphan whose huge head lolls like a glass-eyed hirsute globe  
squats weeping in the dew-chilled herb of dreams

and thrusting the blade of his pen-knife ever deeper into his thigh  
And here is the swift silhouette of a sphinx on a screen in the sky  
Here is the abandoned saw-mill with its broken windows' haggard  
gaze

and see ! here the pair of superb nocturnal swans  
each of which has been saddled with a mirror and firmly trussed  
to the back of a mule

and the mules stationed as sentries on either side the harbour's  
mouth

where every now and then they are washed gently from side to side  
by the changing tide. . . .

And here among the dunes are strewn the battered hulks of wrecks  
which ere the hour is far advanced abruptly rise into the air

and like a furtive school of whales go lunging inland through the  
night

to make their clumsy nests on the most lofty towers and domes ;  
while here upon the beach is the vast ball-room with invisible glass  
walls

across the luminous floor of which a hundred pairs of invisible  
slippers are picking their way among numberless pools of  
invisible blood. . . .

And O how pungent is the firedamp's musty fragrance in the  
hollow of each wave

that falls on the shore by that small black-eyed town on the edge  
of a heliotrope sea

where a man in a brilliantly illumined subterranean padded-cell  
concealed at a depth of about 69 ft. below the level of the ground—  
(a man wearing a mask designed to resemble the head of a Paradise-  
bird

with a diamond-encrusted beak of solid gold  
and clad in a sky-blue satin tunic across the front of which are  
embroidered in silver thread

the words SPITTOON—OSMOSIS—SINGAPORE)—  
sits swinging regularly to and fro upon a platinum trapeze  
and thinking of the iridescent and immobile nipples of Death  
thinking of the vivid short-lived blossoms which are seen to sprout  
occasionally from the mouths of pregnant women  
of how the midnight-sun drapes the landscapes of Arabia with  
invertebrate question-marks like plumes snatched from an ailing  
eagle's tail  
of the colourless abyss of idle days  
of Mary calling home the cattle across the sands of Dee  
and of the end of Summer with its interminable showers of salt  
and of soot. . . .  
But now that the great water-spouts of midnight have subsided out  
at sea  
and that those barbaric cortèges of clouds swaying dangerously  
from side to side across the steeps of heaven  
like sodden hayricks in a sudden storm  
have finally all vanished one by one into the fuming workhouse-  
chimneys of the East—  
now that the cavernous yawn of the lonely female Titan lying  
sleeping on the softly gleaming sands  
has at last swallowed-up every starfish in sight—  
the livid wind once more begins to lift,  
stealthily weaving its fine-spun shawls in writhing swathes around  
the radius of that small black seaside town  
through which by now down each long soundless street  
swarms of somnambulistic barefoot children creep  
by slow degrees, still sealed by spell of dream,  
towards where soon the spume-besilvered waves shall shine and  
seethe  
as a new Sun soars like a song out of the silence of the sea.

## FAREWELL CHORUS

### 1.

AND so ! the long black pullman is at last departing, now,  
After those undermining years of angry waiting and cold tea ;  
And all your small grey faces and wet hankies slide away  
Backwards into the station's cave of cloud. And so Good-bye  
To our home-town, so foreign now its lights no longer show ;  
And to old lives already indistinct as a dull play  
We saw while staying somewhere in the Midlands long ago.

Farewell both to the few and to the many ; for to-night  
Our souls may be required of us ; and so we say Adieu  
To those who charmed us with their ever ready wit  
But could not see the point ; to those whose polished hands  
And voices could allay a little while our private pain  
But could not stay to soothe us when worse bouts began ;  
To those whose beauties were too brief : Farewell, dear friends.

To you as well whom we could never love, hard though  
We tried, because our pity told us you were weak,  
And whom because of pity we abhorred ; to you  
Whose gauche distress and badly-written postcards made us ache  
With angrily impatient self-reproach ; you who were too  
Indelicately tender, whose too soft eyes made us look  
(Against our uncourageous wish) swiftly away. . . .

To those, too, whom we hardly knew, or could not know ;  
To the indifferent and the admired ; to the once-met  
And long-remembered faces : Yes, Good-bye to you  
Who made us turn our heads to look again, and wait  
Four hours in vain at the same place next day ;

Who for a moment might have been the lost selves sought  
Without avail, and whom we know we never shall find now.

Away, away ! Yet now it is no longer in retreat  
That we are leaving. All our will is drowned  
As by an inner tidal-wave that has washed our regret  
And small fears and exhausted implications out of mind.  
You can't accompany our journey. Nor may we return  
Except in unimpassioned recollection from beyond  
That ever-nearer frontier that our fate has drawn.

2.

And so let's take a last look-round, and say Farewell to all  
Events that gave the last decade, which this New Year  
Brings to its close, a special pathos. Let us fill  
One final fiery glass and quickly drink to " the Pre-War "   
Before we greet " the Forties," whose unseen sphinx-face  
Is staring fixedly upon us from behind its veil ;  
Drink farewell quickly, ere the Future smash the glass.

Even while underneath the floor are whirling on  
The wheels which carry us towards some Time-to-Come,  
Let us perform this hasty mental rite (as one  
Might cast a few imagined bays into the tomb  
Of an unloved but memorable great man) ;  
Soon the still-near will seem remotely far ; there's hardly time  
For much oration more than mere Good-bye, again :

To the delusive peace of those disintegrating years  
Through which burst uncontrollably into our view  
Successive and increasingly premonitory flares,  
Explosions of the dangerous truth beneath, which no

Steel-plated self-deception could for long withstand. . . .  
 Years through the rising storm of which somehow we grew,  
 Struggling to keep an anchored heart and open mind,  
  
 Too often failing. Years through which none the less  
 The coaxing of complacency and sleep could still persuade  
 Kind-hearted Christians of the permanence of Peace,  
 Increase of common-sense and civic virtue. Years which bade  
 Less placid conscientious souls indignantly arise  
 Upon ten thousand platforms to proclaim the system mad  
 And urge the liquidation of a senile ruling-class.  
 Years like a prison-wall, frustrating though unsound,  
 On which the brush of History, with quick, neurotic strokes,  
 Its latest and most awe-inspiring fresco soon outlined :  
 Spenglerian lowering of the Western skies, red lakes  
 Of civil bloodshed, free flags flagrantly torn down  
 By order of macabre puppet orators, the blind  
 Leading blindfolded followers into the Devil's den. . . .

### 3.

And so, Good-bye, grim 'Thirties. These your closing days  
 Have shown a new light, motionless and far  
 And clear as ice, to our sore riddled eyes ;  
 And we see certain truths now, which the fear  
 Aroused by earlier circumstances could but compromise,  
 Concerning all men's lives. Beyond despair  
 May we take wiser leave of you, knowing disasters' cause.

Having left all false hopes behind, may we move on  
 At a vertiginous unmeasured speed, beyond, beyond,  
 Across this unknown Present's bleak and rocky plain ;  
 Through sudden tunnels ; in our ears the wind

Echoing unintelligible guns. Mirrored within  
Each lonely consciousness, War's world seems without end.  
Dumbly we stare up at strange skies with each day's dawn.

Could you but hear our final farewell call, how strained  
And hollow it would sound ! We are already far  
Away, forever leaving further leagues behind  
Of this most perilous and incoherent land  
We're in. The unseen enemy are near.  
Above the cowering capital Death's wings impend.  
Rapidly under ink-black seas to-day's doomed disappear.

We are alone with one another, but our eyes  
Meet seldom in the dark. What a relentless roar  
Stuffs every ear, as though with wool ! The winds that rise  
Out of our dereliction's vortex, hour by hour,  
To bring us word of the incessant wordless guns,  
Tirades of the insane, thick hum of 'planes, the rage of fire,  
Eruptions, waves : all end in utmost silence in our brains.  
" The silence after the viaticum." So silent is the ray  
Of naked radiance that lights our actual scene,  
Leading the gaze into the nameless and unknown  
Extremes of this existence where fear's armour falls away  
And lamentation and defeat and pain  
Are all transfigured by acceptance ; where men see  
The tragic splendour of their final destiny.

*New Year 1940.*

## LAURIE LEE

LAURIE LEE was born in the Cotswolds in 1914. His favourite poets are John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and F. G. Lorca whose work he learned to appreciate during the years he spent wandering in Spain before the Civil War. He says of his attitude to poetry in general :

“ I find most modern poetry rather too bleak for my liking ; it is smart, polished, epigrammatic and often searching, but it seems to lack the heat of a genuine emotion.

I don't look upon poetry as a specialised, but as a domestic art. Poetry is popularly considered in two lights ; in one it is the secret and embarrassing pursuit of adolescents, in the other it's the snobbish cipher of highbrow intellectualism ; yet if existing poets wrote more simply, more humanly, these misconceptions could be removed and the ordinary man would no longer be ashamed of poetry, nor of himself as a potential poet.”

## STONES AND SCORPIONS

ALL rinsed with sun and yet  
having no flesh to hold it,  
like skeletons in a noose  
we hang from this brilliant summer.

Behind the sea-wire and the leaves of paint  
the petrol-hearted tigers breed,  
their fatal jaws a triumph  
of wheels and tricks and dreams.

So agile with performing terror,  
their flaming tracks across the flowers  
write iron sentences of power  
and polished proverbs of madness.

What vanity persuades us from  
the comfortable rhymes of peace  
to learn by death's apprenticeship  
this drunken doggerel of despair?

O summer's lotus of delight  
still spreads its spicy banquet down,  
and still we feed and choke upon  
the stone and scorpion of war.

And never comes the silver star  
pointing the cradle of the dove,  
but every night the harvest moon  
to reap a rotting seed of blood.

## AT NIGHT

I **THINK** at night my hands are mad,  
for they follow the irritant texture of darkness  
continually carving the sad leaf of your mouth  
in the thick black bark of sleep.

And my finger-joints are quick with insanity,  
springing with lost amazement  
through a vast waste of dreams  
and forming frames of desire  
around the thought of your eyes.

By day, the print of your body  
is like a stroke of sun on my hands,  
and the choir of your blood  
goes chanting incessantly  
through the echoing channels of my wrists.

But I am lost in my hut  
when the stars are out,  
for my palms have a catlike faculty of sight  
and the surface of every minute  
is a swinging image of you.

## PORT OF FAMAGUSTA

THE sun cries through his fingers  
to a herd of scarlet asses,  
and the green horizon throws  
shutters on the oranges.

Crooning by the water's edge  
the cabaret prepares her nest,  
hatching hollow eggs of lust  
from the dancers' painted dust.

And the harlot walks alone  
like a rumour through the street,  
her buttocks bright as swinging lamps,  
her smile as old as stone.

With the archways full of camels  
and my ears of crying zithers  
how can I resolve the cipher  
of your occidental heart ?

How can I against the city's  
Syrian tongue and Grecian door  
seek a bed to reassemble  
the jigsaw of your western love ?

Prayers falling from the mosque  
scatter wide their fruitless bones,  
lost among the gramophone's  
lush electric evensong.

And the moon up from the sea  
climbs the beanstalk of the night,  
while the stars like dominoes  
fill the tables of the sky.

## SONG IN THE MORNING

THERE are hooked thorns  
in the couch of ease  
and pins in the floor  
of the gentlest chamber.

In your eyes I see  
your dead fathers  
and your provinces of charm  
full of nightingales  
and the peonies of my anger.

In your eyes I see  
scaffolds of love arising  
and the most remote heaven  
as familiar as bread.

But even you  
mistress of blushing walls  
mistress of scarves and painted skins  
of oiled walking and intricate obedience,

Cannot seal the tomb  
we fashion with our mouths  
nor tell which hour vermillion  
will burn us for the grave.

## SONG IN AUGUST 1940

PONDERING your scented skull  
I seek its antique song of peace :  
    desires uncovered by your tide  
    are trembling reeds with sea-blue voices.

I wind my hands around your head  
and blow the hollow flute of love,  
    but anger sprouts among the leaves,  
    and fields grow sharp with war.

Wheat bleeds upon a wind of steel  
and ivy splits the poisoned sky,  
    while wasps that cannot fertilise  
    dive at the open flowers of men.

Your lips are turreted with guns  
and bullets crack across your kiss  
    and death slides down upon a string  
    to rape the heart of your horizon.

## POEM

THE evening, the heather,  
the unsecretive cuckoo  
and butterflies in their disorder,  
not a word of war as we lie  
our mouths in a hot nest  
and the flowers advancing.

Does a hill defend itself,  
does a river run to earth  
to hide its quaint neutrality?  
A boy is shot with England in his brain  
but she lies brazen yet beneath the sun,  
she has no honour and she has no fear.

## INTERVAL

ALL day the purple battle of love  
as scented mouths position  
soft fields of contesting languor  
and jealous peaks of suspicion.

All day the trumpeting of fingers,  
the endless march of desire  
across the continent of an eyelid  
or the desert of a hair.

How long we roam these territories  
trailing our twin successes,  
till the bending sun collapses  
and I escape your kisses.

Then I crack the night like a coconut,  
and earth regains its shape ;  
at last, the eunuch's neutral dream  
and the beardless touch of sleep.

## LANDSCAPE

THE season does not leave your limbs,  
like a covered field you lie,  
and remembering the exultant plough  
your sheltered bosom stirs  
and whispers warm with rain.

Waiting does not leave your eyes,  
your belly is as bright as snow  
and there your naked fingers  
are spread over the dark flowers  
shaking out their roots.

My kiss has not yet left your blood,  
but slumbers in a stream  
within your quiet caves :  
listening to the sun, it will cry forth,  
and burst with leaves, and blossom with a name.

## POEM IN THE COUNTRY

HERON, do not hang over the village  
with your wide wings,  
do not remind us the sun can be shuttered  
with a cross.

The dead creep out of the sun  
every morning,  
and the ladder of fear runs up and down  
from the sky.

The caterpillar leaves the leaf  
like a broken house,  
and the lake explodes silently  
with a barrage of lilies.

I take my love to the woods  
but she hides her eyes,  
I take her among the quarries  
but she trembles.

She walks the ruined field  
of the distant city,  
and weeping searches every stone  
for a child's pressed flower.

## POEM

VILLAGE of winter carols  
and gawdy spinning tops,  
of greenhanded walnuts  
and games in the moon.

You were adventure's web,  
the flying flag of fear  
riding black stallions  
through the rocky streets.

You were the first faint map  
of the mysterious sun,  
chart of my hidden flesh  
and the mushroom-tasting kiss.

But no longer do I join  
your childrens' sharp banditti,  
nor seek the glamour of  
your ravished apples.

Your hillocks build no more  
their whales and pyramids,  
nor howl across the night  
their springing wolves.

For crouching in my brain  
the crafty thigh of love  
twists your old landscape  
with a new device.

And every field has grown  
a strange and flowering pit  
where I must try the blind  
and final trick of youth.

## ADAM DRINAN

ADAM DRINAN is a Scotsman in his thirty-first year. He tries in his poetry to reconcile the conflicting literary traditions of rich and poor, and of English and Scottish. His assonances are derived from tendencies in Gaelic verse, and are therefore different from those in fashion to-day in England.

*The Men of the Rocks* telescopes localities in Sutherland and the Western Isles. The phrase transcribed as "Hook oo rin yo" (Hug ò rin ò) is an exclamation of triumph and delight used in ancient sea-raiders' songs, here ironical. "The Sea likes to be Visited" is an old Gaelic saying, here varied. All such ideas, and the actual events mentioned, are part of the heritage of ordinary people. So is the legend (now of course only a fancy) that seals embody the spirits of dead rulers. Of old these were Norse, now they might be English. The poem is a warning. A Highlander walks through his native place during an invasion threat. In a vision he foresees Fifth-Column treachery, and his own death in consequence; the treachery made possible only because of present conditions in the Highlands.

CRYSTAL long-boat shadowily moving  
 curlew home to constant moorland  
 rounding point to an ancient mooring  
 leeward of the skerries

a wan grief of unanimous oars  
 a weary heave on ghostly rowlocks ;

home to the long hill-fortressed harbour  
 arms hauling, voices hailing,  
 starved seagulls' drunken harmony  
 dirge on the wind drifting :

" Swirl of a deep year over our heads  
 sleep of a deep year round our eyelids.

Nightly, moonily, nightly oaring  
 the barnacled hulk from the black sea-floor  
 a moon and a night and a moon borrowing  
 in every year of doom

loom of land piercing our dream  
 release-image pleasing our gloom.

Night of the first moon. Lay in the anchorage.  
 Curing-, storing-, landing-places  
 glowed on shore in grander days  
 when the rippled world was young.

What those ribs left sprung on shingle,  
 if they are not our fathers' ships ?

Patterned wefts for the ghosts of fishers  
these tattered nets the wind quivers.  
Who but the geese and the seagulls forage  
where the old men flourished ?

No place here for dead sea-warriors,  
no stay here for the brave sea-wanderers ;  
one look checked us, turned us, warning us  
back to the blank of the sea.

Night of the next moon. Beached and landed.  
Oats, and cattle, and a strath once shaggy ;  
tales ran warm here ; women sang  
when the furrowed world was young.

What will we gather in the time of hairst  
if it will not be bracken and heather ?  
Who from the hill will answer, other,  
lonelier, than the pipe of plover ?  
What has he got that siezed and feued it ?  
Dead birds and solitudes.

He that of indian plains made serfdom  
wastes our glens to take his freedom.  
Such was our home-come. Back to the doom, come  
back yet a year to the sea.

Night of the last moon. Moored in port  
summoning out our sons and daughters,  
an old call of an old order  
when the wrinkled world was young.

What these passages narrow, secluded,  
hard, to the sea-soft, feeling foot ?

Whose these voices drawn, dreary,  
harsh to our island-subtle ears ?  
Who responds ? who grasps ? who governs ?  
where are our children gone ?

Cold, cold, cold the sea  
cold the sea, and glistening ! ”  
(Their stiff arms fixed at the elbow)

“ Cold, cold, cold the sea  
the sea, the snake, and the exile ! ”  
(Their shirts as seals’ fur wettened)  
“ Bitter to the young a young world’s death  
Better for the old a youth of legend ! ”

Ship of glass in water melting  
under the bubbly lipper settling  
heads bobbing on waves’ swell  
men that have been are seals.

Men that have been are seals, swimming  
save for my friend on a rock, sitting.  
Tears his human eyes have dimmed.  
We gaze at each other on the skerries.

WE heard a coronach and sad feet passing  
 from crops destroyed and clachan that had collapsed  
 under perpetual shelling of the seeds of grass

till crofter refugees from happy townships  
 clung to the cliffs, cut rock into crude houses  
 learning seaskill from men that had been drowned.

A flock we watched, a flock of our gentle fellows  
 cruelly herded by sheep to a waiting vessel,  
 their holdings occupied by an invasion of bents

till the soil lost heart, the water skulked in bogs,  
 after the sheep came the heather mopping up  
 and bracken, unrolled like green gas in the flocks.

We watched, my seal and I, in a pitiful tussle  
 the sweet and willing, ancient tillage smothered  
 by dark water, fronds dark, stems dark and tough.

We heard the helpless earth crying to be cleaned  
 its human misdirections to be made clear  
 its riches to be free of bondage and weed.

But men were in two classes : rich and poor,  
 the poor excluded from the purple beauty,  
 the rich, needing no more, played on the moor.

“Endure !” I cried “and you the poor are paid.  
 Their exiles undercut their foreign slaves.  
 By this new level will not your soil be saved ?

“ Patience ! ” I cried, as others had before me,  
“ The time is not yet ripe enough to fall ;  
and all turns gradual to goodness by reform ! ”

But my seal rebuked me in a pitying glance  
and fleered into the sea, shedding humanity.  
Thereafter I was alone to listen-in to the land.

Tons of acres of proliferous cotton  
 waste picturesque on the holiday hill.  
 Peaceful waterlilies choke the lochan.  
 Suck of soggy sphagnum clasps the heels.

Here was a youth, a young wife, and two children,  
 a third to come. They paid less rent than sheep.  
 Here was their croft, this stump the stonechat chides from.  
 Deep the heather as that night's snowfall deep.

Here was a ditch. She cuddled the children, thanking  
 almighty God for his lovingkindly mud ;  
 and drew across the top a smouldered blanket  
 and praised Him for the love wherewith He loved.

The factor searched and came upon the litter  
 and prodded with his stick until they fled.  
 The husband was away to earn his living.  
 At dawn on the white hill the wife was dead.

Glistening dragon-flies zig-zag and flutter  
 covering the stagnant water like a veil  
 their whirring audible like the long rustle  
 of snake in grasses or birchleaves in a gale.

Here a child urges : " Look at my lovely Fighter ! "  
 —a holiday-making English girl it is  
 with a dead dragonfly as paper glider  
 in the death-smell where the hot bog-myrtle is.

CROFTER watching his cattle on the mountainside  
 gazing over his knees from the mountainside  
 remembering what about the mountainside ?

Dog watching crofter on the knoll of the old shieling  
 cattle watching dog on the knoll of the old shieling  
 crofter watching cattle on the knoll of the old shieling

Dressed stones have reverted to rock of the mountainside  
 stone of walls reverted to rock of the mountainside  
 walls of the dwellingplace to the mountainside  
     like loch water solid  
     after the solid salmon  
     reverts to solid water.

Our pastures are bitten and bare  
 our wool is blown to the winds  
 our mouths are stopped and dumb  
 our oatfields weak and thin.  
 Nobody fishes the loch  
 nobody stalks the deer.  
 Let us go down to the sea.  
 The friendly sea likes to be visited.

Our fathers sleep in the cemetery  
 their boats, cracked, by their side.  
 The sea turns round in his sleep  
 pleasurecraft nod on the tide.  
 Sea ducks slumber on waves  
 sea eagles have flown away.  
 Let us put out to sea.  
 The fat sea likes to be visited.

Fat sea, what's on your shelf?  
 all the grey night we wrestled.  
 To muscle, to skill, to petrol,  
 Hook oo rin yo ! . . . one herring !  
 and of that only the head.  
 Dogfishes had the rest.  
 A parting gift from the sea.  
 The merry sea likes to be visited.

Merry sea, what have you sent us ?  
 a rusty english trawler ?  
 The crew put into the hotel  
 the engineer overhauls her.

Gulls snatch offal to leeward  
We on the jetty await  
gifts of the cod we cant afford. . . .  
The free sea likes to be visited.

Free were our fathers' boats  
whose guts are strewn on the shore.  
Steam ships were bought by the rich  
cheap from the last war.  
They tear our nets to pieces  
and the sea gives them our fishes.  
Even he favours the rich.  
The false sea likes to be visited.

THEN anger drew me out of myself like a gun  
and I armed myself with a stone to make him dumb  
a round hole piercing the white core of the stone

as it was for the seers who studied the trend of things  
using such focus to narrow their knowledge in  
personal symbol scourging general sins

and as if I too had used the stone as a lens  
I saw, troubled and dim, the eyes of my friends  
and shadows on faces of ministers and men.

Darkness drew over inevitable as rain  
hands groping for picked bones by lamplight faint  
but treacherous signals winked in the breasts of the great

as if to steal seals barking along the coast  
solidified blobs of oil, slimy and loathsome,  
seal with human faces rank-proud, boastful.

A swing of the ground from under faltering feet  
a constant pull of the gravity of duty  
certainty only in military boots.

Hairy touch of the dark on the back of the hand  
Hail of an unknown voice that may be a man's  
unchanged the land rolls for them that own the land

Then knowing what was to come was bound to come  
I dropped the pebble into the water's gloom  
and left the minister and stumbled home.

A small white stone, and a hole piercing the stone,  
eye to the socket, brain in brain's control,  
as the ancient seers had studied the future, ere they foretold it.

THUNDER will it be ? behind the mountain, thunder ?  
 or cawing of corbies or divebombing and gunfire ?  
 puffs of fairy shells in burst bog-cotton  
 or speed of a motorbicycle round the mountain ?

Swing your torch ! Is it Uisdean mac Rath from the bike  
 jumping, with blood it may be stains his thigh ?  
 " Landed ! Man, they're here ! They're shelling us at the Kyle . . ."  
 what splinters of memory will then gash silence ?

Seals, turned men again, that will have come back,  
 uncomprehending pity turned to stupid anger  
 which wraps them up in steel and ingenious armour  
 to destroy what they have lost, the loss no answer ?

Seals that are of the sea in which they live  
 as false as the sea is ready to deceive  
 human seals that have not left seal belief  
 will have waited sea-years deep to invade their dream.

" For dear God's sake, let you go back to Kinloch !  
 Ring the alarum ! Bring us men, get lorries,  
 machineguns ! At the Kyle we've only shotguns,  
 hurry ! " . . . to faint at our feet for loss of blood.

" Stay ! " I'll say to Iain " Do you what you can for him.  
 Shoulder him down, get him yonder to the mac Andreis "  
 starting the bike and roaring down the beallach  
 yerked up and down in the saddle like a tappet.

Doubt you will put on me, you spying ocean,  
why you should offer that landingplace to their choice.  
No road from the Kyle! From Kinloch there is a road.  
And their leaders have lived in castles on this coast.

Doubt whether Uisdean will not be in a plot  
loyal to the enemy though they have shot him.  
Elsewhere this treachery for power and property.  
Here? In this crosscutting of men, why not?

Will I meet Fearghus, double-doubting Fearghus,  
tramping his secret ploys night-coloured, furtive?  
For uttering facts, what time wasted in wordiness!  
what sickening doubt of a friend's trustworthiness!

"Run you, run you, Fearghus! Put hand to kirk bell rope!"

"You will not have met me, Adhamh, I'm in my home."

"Who cares about salmon? The enemy are upon us!"

"The bell I cannot ring. I have no key to the lock."

I'll reach the Post. I'll knock, kick, yell like a madman.

Old Raibeart sleeps. With stones in fists I'll hammer.

At last a window up: "Whisht you now, Adhamh!

Have you forgotten, man, that this is the Sabbath?"

"The Lord's curses, old Rab, on your fuddled head!

Get me the Aerodrome! They're at the Kyle!" swearing,

the rest of my words broken in the clang of the bell.

He'll let me in then. Both of us will call help.

The telephone, I, he at the telegraph buzzer

tapping, smacking, cursing, thumping, muttering.

And then we'll stop, looking afraid and puzzled.

Some one has known the hour. The wires are cut.

THEN I, Adhamh na Daor Ionnán, who have foreseen these sorrows  
must leave on that angry road my shattered body  
and down to the seashore drift to await my comrades.

Rising of a great mist like a bank of cumulus  
a mist thick as the white will of a multitude  
formless, all-pervading, tinged rose with blood.

Merriment of sea shore with his coloured skerries  
sea-pinks cherry-pink like smiles of fairyfolk  
milkwort and butterwort as fresh as dairies,

his glaucous myrtle starting from the bog  
his foxgloves peacefully pealing from the crag  
purple orchis and primroses on the ledge,

so green the water where his mergansers cluster  
sea-swallows gleam bright emerald crossing above it  
but all to me, all colours lose their lustre.

Angry the mist creeps over innocent hills  
the merchant mist who keeps his thoughts concealed  
mist on a mission of that cold and greedy sea.

Soon grey and whole will callous mist confine me  
faintness of eye and lassitude will hide me  
I cannot see you, comrades. You who have fallen, find me !

Your thin voices I shall hear about my head  
“ Who has deceived us ? who is it that is our enemy ?  
what for have we been living ? what for are we dead ? ”

and I shall rise from the grey rock and give you greeting  
weeping, without shame, to see you weeping,  
and the six of us set off from our last meeting.

For the rocks will be sinking down to the sea's level  
moorland and harbour dipping to the sea's lip  
and my comrades and I, slipping into the sea's life  
will become new seals in the sea.

Joyful barking of black heads swimming in to meet us  
soundings of trumpets, wavings of many-coloured weeds,  
long male roll of the sea drumming to receive us,  
the voice of the people  
booming out of a mountain like an idle bell  
the force of the people  
rotting with birds of prey in the glens and hills  
the cause of the people  
rocking under water with the mock-flux of sea shells,  
as I on the moor can see now and forthtell it  
accurate if not in words, in trend and the spirit.

## ENVOI

LITTLE meadowpipit, little heather lark  
insignificantly sitting on a stone  
    it was from no moorland stone  
that another poet greeted his soul in another lark.

No frenzy here, no whirl of imagery  
no soaring up to sun-enchanted clouds  
    the day's serious clouds  
overcast our personal rapture and imagery

so begin no song! begin a sudden striking of single notes  
as an alarm to call, to pull, to irk, to urge,  
    faster and shriller the urge,  
till the little Spitfire gains the height of a parabola of notes

spread, spread you wings flat to a tilted plane  
and drop like an arrowhead falling light as glass  
    your body bright as glass  
glinting in the sunlight as if dropped from a plane

the call and the flight to end suddenly in the heather.  
There sits the bird insignificant on a stone  
    o, underneath that stone  
lie our sires that fought when yours watched in the heather

And as surely, lark, as your offspring when they hear you  
will learn that exciting call to action and freedom  
    life and action and freedom  
teach ours also to learn whenever they hear you,

so when my successor fronts you on this moor  
lark of the wastes hand on my message and song  
to him singing his song  
among free people and happy, here on the moor ;

and so the generations and poets that follow us  
in times that without us could not have been secure,  
knowing their life secure,  
the lark's alarum will ever remind to honour us.

## ARTHUR HARVEY

ARTHUR HARVEY was born in Cornwall, and educated at Oxford and in Paris. He produces and acts, and has great faith in the future of poetry in the theatre. He lives in Northern Ireland. Some of the poems printed here have appeared in *Folios of New Writing*.

## THE COUNTRY WOMEN

OURS are the beaten-earth floors  
The white-washed walls,  
The three small windows.

For us the hen-fouled mud at the door,  
On the floor,  
The ankle-clinging mud in the lane.

Ours are the open hearth,  
The beds in the corner,  
The meal sacks in the broken panes.

We wait on rain when no rain falls,  
Or watch it drown the new-mown hay :  
We fear a blight on the potatoes,  
A dead pig, a fox in the hen-house,  
A roof-lifting wind.

We know the goose-flesh blank of dawn,  
Our heavy bellies sagging from cracking backs ;  
We know the wet and wind in the chimney,  
The eye-tearing fire lighting,  
The retching and chair-catching sickness,  
And hot black tea that drowns the rising waves.

For us the patching of the patch-work clothes,  
The tying with string of the gaping boots  
Or blue-bare feet on flinty roads.

We fight the wind, the rain and the mud-sick earth  
Through the hungry years for the hungry mouths ;  
Our banners are the dragging pains in the back,  
The heavy heads,  
The empty bellies,  
The flabby breasts  
And the empty eyes.

We know the sudden fist on the jaw,  
The kick in the belly,  
The savage taking and the drunken forgetting,  
The rats on the floor,  
Endless to-days with no to-morrow.

We are the toilers and moilers,  
The breeding women of the lanes and fields ;  
We hate the laughter we have lost,  
The laughter we have gained,  
Our daughters will know our pains :  
We are the finished and withered,  
The ending and fading,  
We are the ending and the beginning.

## THE TOILERS

We are the makers of gold,  
The money-spinners,  
The alchemists who turn the coal to gold  
With acid from our sweating bodies.

Our hands know pick and shovel,  
Morning cold on frosted broccoli ;  
We feel the hungry, sucking earth about our feet,  
The knife of the sea-wind  
In our bending backs.

Ours is the ice dawn  
When cold, grey streets  
Are still with night-fear,  
Hungry for heavy boots and opening windows  
To bear them company.

Our light is the half-light, the half-dark  
Of dawn  
In country lanes  
Where cottage smoke  
Recites the new-lit fire,  
The sleep-heavy eyes  
Of women making tea.

Our ears know the hammer stroke,  
Clangour of the factory,  
Hissing of steam, grinding of brakes ;  
The sucking of mud about our horses' feet  
And clear, clean chatter of the night-dark sea.

We are the strong men,  
Iron men and steel men,  
Sweat has sculptured muscle-beauty on our arms,  
Our bellies and our backs ;  
We are the hard and hot men  
Who break the night  
Upon a sawdust floor,  
To be a dream about our feet  
While we drink the day down ;  
The long strong day  
We drink, but cannot drown.

What has become of our strength ?  
Where has our sweat flowed ?  
Our muscles have ached,  
Our eyes and ears have strained,  
And in our hands  
There is no gold,  
No skill to feel the beauty of smooth surfaces,  
The loveliness of sea-planed stones,  
Breast-lovely curves of plate glass-windows.

Our hands and eyes,  
Our lips and ears,  
Our legs and bellies  
Are forged into the tools,  
The wheels, the plough-shares and the spades :

## HANDS

SLEEPING hands, palms upwards,  
Sleeping on sleeping knees ;  
Fingers, sleep-slack,  
Burning blue dungarees.

Brick-yard hands and granite hard,  
Mighty, muscle-mighty,  
Fighting hammers, smashers  
on piston-driven corded arms.

Heavy hands, sure, bone-ridged,  
Rough, rough-rasping,  
Light on knees  
As raspberry leaves on rivers.

## BLOOD-SWEAT

I BLEED, tear-struggle through bleak of days,  
My feet, barenaked, fighting, bleed childblood  
On misteaching's rocks ; drowned in sweat, cold mud  
Of slough uncast ; for casting body prays ;  
Belly torrentrushes down, heart betrays  
Brain ; brain, in flame of fear, chews bitter cud  
Of vomitted reflection, blood in flood  
Drowns sick, cold fear, builds new banks, terror stays,

Weak muscles, drowned in bloodsweat, burst and grow ;  
Cast flesh, recast, poured molten on the bone  
From mind's night-won crucible, strong for blow,  
Piston-driven blow of mind on flesh, stone  
Moulded to steel of bone, shall shout and sow  
The seeds of strength, that bone may speak alone.

## WORDS MIGHT BREED TIGERS

WORDS might breed tigers  
In the blood  
Or light a sun  
In the eye :

Thoughts might fire lions  
In the loins  
Or steel-sinewed panthers  
In the mind :

Wrongs might father serpents  
On the tongue  
Or foundry-blast an eagle  
In the brain :

But words, thoughts and wrongs  
Have given birth to mules  
Or, perhaps, a ligan :  
Mules are obstinate, but cheap and strong,  
We put the ligan in a cage for fools to spit upon.

## I WOULD SHEAR FLESH FLEECE AWAY

I WOULD shear flesh fleece away  
With clippers, steel clippers of the mind,  
Thick, oily fleece that makes me blind ; blind,  
Soft like puppies in the hay.

I would be firmly moulded,  
Moulded cold and contoured like a stone,  
Refusing flesh to fortify the bone,  
Not weak in fleece enfolded.

Drowned in foul flesh-fathered sweat  
The spirit strives, valiant strives, near dies,  
Yet beauty cries, bone-beauty strident cries,  
And I, to liquidate my debt.

## THE FINAL LOSS

RIDING self on a tight-held rein  
Is to make strong  
The self, but self in bitter pain  
Cries loud, cries long.

Do others crucify the flesh  
To woo a cross ?  
Is life within a blood-warm mesh  
The final loss ?

Will flesh denied, deride its death  
To Phoenix rise  
And soar, and sear with burning breath  
Self-blinded eyes ?

## LABOURERS

OCTOBER, the brown month, has bent us,  
We are broken on the potato-digger wheel,  
The wet, brown earth has sucked and drained  
The heat of morning tea away.

We have gathered the brown spuds into sacks  
And swung them on to breaking backs ;  
Night is an aching memory  
Of stramming, gusty rain ;  
A memory and pain  
Of clabber-club-foot haughlin' down the lane.

The brown earth scums its skin upon our hands  
Our hard, mapped palms  
Have lost the bluebell lightness of their touch ;  
Knowing the plough, the hook, the spade,  
They have forgotten the blade-clear flesh of maids  
And all the hand-cupped tenderness of breasts.  
There is no rest for iron hands  
Round in the ice-hot bands  
Of drear November's mountain-frozen rain.

In guttery November's marshy fields  
We cut the rushes  
For the winter-roof of thatch  
For yellow blockhouse stacks ;  
The green fields lap themselves in grey  
Of sleet and brown of new-turned furrows,  
And rain has carved our bodies lean and hard ;  
Our hands hang swollen from our sodden arms,

Yet still like clockwork toys we stiffly move  
To cut and carry, carry, cut and move,  
Till field and sky, rushes and sodden ground  
Move with us slowly, slowly round.

From pig-sty, stall and byre  
We cart the smoking funeral pyre  
Of earth's warm food to fields again  
To feed the earth that waits the grain.  
We fork the black, warm hills of dung  
In fields where autumn rain has hung  
Its steel-grey sheeting day and night,  
And in our raindrop-eyelashed sight  
The mare's great haunches swing and roll,  
And man, mare, cart and dung enfold and hold  
The day in smoky clouds of dreams and steam.

The farm-yard clabber hobbles the children's play,  
The harness of the day  
Has hitched the cart of labour to our backs ;  
We take the strain, pull, draw away  
The burden of the dreary day  
And round our feet cart-kneaded mud  
Slows man or beast ; slows, thins the blood.

# COME SHE MAY OR COME SHE MUST

JANE, content, warm as a plum,  
Smiled to see the morning come.

This is the house that Jane built.

Memory's mouse  
Lives in the house  
That Jane built.

Come you may or come you must,  
Flame fades to ash and love to lust.

Desire is the cat  
That fears the mouse  
That lives in the house  
That Jane built.

Come you may or come you must,  
The summer day is choked with dust.

The dog of will  
Runs from the cat  
That fears the mouse  
That lives in the house  
That Jane built.

Jane and I with heavy eyes  
Smiled at the blood on morning's sky.

Come you may or come you must,  
The blade of anguish woos the rust ;  
The night is livid and the mouse  
With searchlight eyes pads through the house.

There is no cow, no maid forlorn,  
All men are tattered, some are torn,  
And Registrars are shaven and shorn.

No horn can toss the dog of will,  
The cat of longing on the sill  
Is frozen to the ice-faced shutter.

Come she may or come she must,  
Flame flickers in the gathering dust.

Smile Jane, dance mouse,  
There's always a wedding  
In our cold house.

